

Amendments to the Abstract

Please replace the Abstract with the following Abstract.

A valve plate assembly (9) having a plurality of reed valves; each reed valve comprising a reed (11), a port (13) which is opened and closed by the reed (11) and a damper (15) for mechanically damping motion of the reed (11); the damper (15) comprising a tube (17) which is attached to a valve plate (7) which extends vertically into a suction chamber, which is in communication with the port (13) on a side of the port (13) remote from the reed (11), and which is of such a size that, in use of the valve assembly (9), the tube (17) contains a column of fluid which is sufficient to provide substantial mechanical damping of the motion of the reed (11).